saalt
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER

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August 10, 2017

The Honorable Congressman Keith Ellison
2263 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Ellison:

On the 16th anniversary of the tragic attacks of September 11th, South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) will host a Congressional Briefing from **10:00 – 11:00 am on September 12, 2017 in SVC 203-02.** This year's anniversary falls in the midst of the largest spike in hate violence impacting South Asian Americans since the year after 9/11, fanned by divisive and fraught xenophobic political rhetoric that explicitly targets South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Arab, and Middle Eastern communities.

As a leader addressing these issues, we ask that you **co-sponsor** this **Congressional Briefing** and provide opening or closing remarks based on your availability. We kindly ask that you let us know if you are able to do so **by August 25, 2017.**

The goals of the Briefing are the following:

- Discuss updated data and key incidents of hate violence in 2017 targeting South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Arab, and Middle Eastern Americans, which SAALT has been documenting in an online database and aggregating with other impacted communities.
- Take stock of the continued backlash and its impact on our communities, intensified by government policies and practices, including but not limited to the Muslim Ban and widespread detentions and deportations.
- Hear from grassroots community leaders that are part of the SAALT-led National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO) on how we can protect and defend the rights of South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Arab, and Middle Eastern communities.

We thank you for co-sponsoring SAALT's Congressional Briefing earlier this year on the findings of our report "Power, Pain, Potential," released in January 2017. The report examined the rising tide of hate violence and xenophobic political rhetoric targeting South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Arab, and Middle Eastern communities in the United States during the 2016 election cycle. We documented 207 incidents of hate violence and xenophobic political rhetoric aimed at our communities, a 34% increase in less than a third of the time covered in our 2014 report, Under Suspicion, Under Attack. An astounding 95% of these 207 incidents were motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment.

We continue to document incidents of violence against our communities, which are accelerating even more rapidly since the election. It is clear to our communities that the troubling tide of violence does not appear to be diminishing anytime soon. In fact, it has been bolstered by a wave of openly and unabashedly discriminatory policies explicitly targeting our communities as we continue to be portrayed as un-American, disloyal, and worthy of suspicion and attack. We hope you can join us and other leaders to counter this

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epidemic of hate and reinforce our belief in core American values of freedom, religious liberty, and equality before the law.

To learn more about our work please visit us at www.saalt.org. We look forward to working with you on behalf of our communities.

Sincerely yours,

Suman Raghunathan
Executive Director